



State Representative
**Jeanne
Edwards**

Rep. Jeanne Edwards

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Fall 2001

1st District Update

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Dear Neighbors,

Like many of you, our priorities at the Legislature have been altered by the recent terrorist attacks. In particular, we have a renewed commitment to public safety. We are working hard to ensure that our state emergency service employees- including the Washington State Patrol, the National Guard, the state Department of Health- are well-prepared in the event of a crisis.

These attacks have also had a significant effect on our economy. Planned layoffs at Boeing, reduced tourism and job cuts in the airlines industry are among the hardest-hit sectors in our region. In turn, these economic impacts have caused a sharp reduction in the revenue that pays for state services. The result will be major cuts in state programs that will have a real effect on services for seniors, the disabled, health care programs, parks, and other important state responsibilities. But it is our goal to trim this budget in a way that does not harm our citizens, jeopardize public safety, or worsen our economic condition.

As we work to shore up our economy, it is especially critical to address our transportation problems. In this newsletter, we will take a look at how we got into the transportation mess that frustrates so many of us and how we may be able to get out.

Clearly, the biggest issues facing us are the transportation mess and the budget shortfall. Please be sure to contact me at any time with your concerns about these or any other issues. Thank you for giving me the opportunity to represent you.

Sincerely,

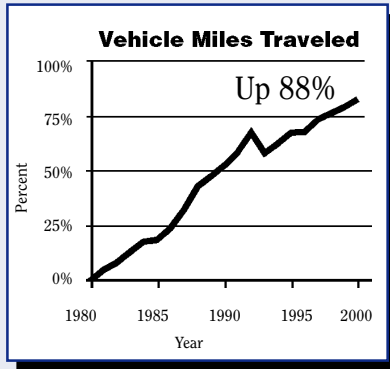
A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Jeanne A. Edwards". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Jeanne Edwards
State Representative

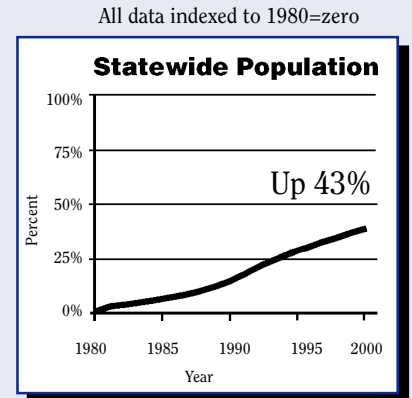
What's going on with Washington's transportation system?

Washington State is in a serious transportation crisis. We have ended up in this situation because over the last twenty years we have not invested enough in our transportation system at a time of booming population growth and burgeoning economic activity.

Population growth, vehicle registrations, vehicle miles traveled and movement of freight have risen sharply over the past two decades.



Since 1980, the state's population has grown by 43%.

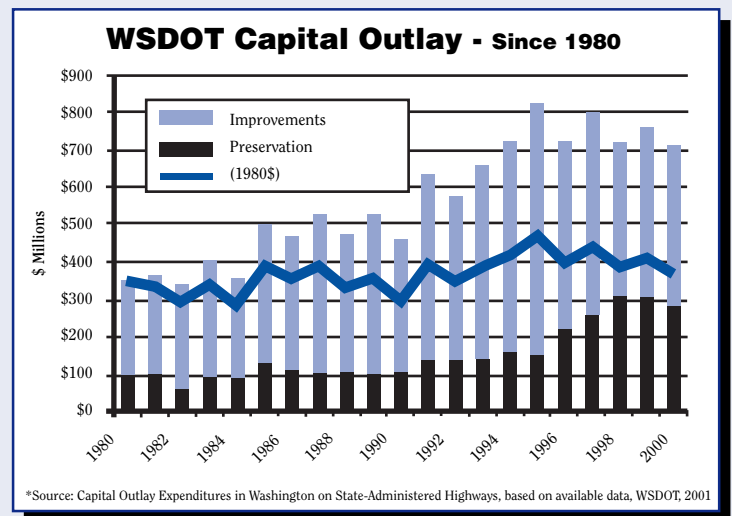


Since 1980, vehicle miles driven in the state have grown by 88%.

Meanwhile, transportation spending adjusted for inflation has remained the same since 1980.

Investment has not kept pace.

Total capital outlays on the transportation system directed through the Department of Transportation actually have not grown on an inflation-adjusted basis (1980 dollars).



Why have we underinvested in our transportation system?

Several forces have brought about this traffic mess. First, this region has been one of the fastest-growing areas in the country, making it difficult to keep pace with the transportation needs of the area. Second, the gas tax is not indexed to inflation so it has lost value each year since 1991. Third, the loss of the Motor Vehicle Excise Tax after the passage of Initiative 695 wiped out a major source of transportation funding.



Another problem is the export of transportation dollars to rural counties. Because roads and highways do not stop at county lines, funds are allocated throughout the state sometimes in a manner that is disproportionate to the transportation needs of a community. In Snohomish County, for every dollar raised by gas taxes, only 93 cents are invested back into county roads and highways. In King County, for every dollar invested, only 86 cents are returned to pay for local roads and highways. Meanwhile, Ferry County receives \$9.45 in transportation spending for every dollar in gas tax that it yields.

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What does this mean for our community?

The consequences of this traffic mess are unpleasant for all of us. Whether arriving late for work or missing an appointment or being greeted at home with a cold dinner, we've all been affected by our region's transportation problems. In terms of real numbers, a recent study showed that the impact of our traffic congestion



tion costs each area motorist 53 hours per year and \$930 lost to fuel costs and time sitting in traffic.

The overall economic impact is even worse. Some studies estimate that our traffic problems cost the region's businesses as much as \$2 billion per year in productivity. This results when trucks delivering wheat and apples from eastern Washington are delayed by traffic or companies moving products up and down I-5 to the ports in western Washington become mired in gridlock. The region's leading employer, Boeing, has even stated that its plans regarding where to build its Sonic Cruiser may hinge on traffic conditions in our area. Ultimately, the health of our economy depends on a transportation system that gets people and products to their destinations on time.

What is being done now to address our transportation problems?

Last session we passed several measures to save taxpayers money by streamlining the permitting process and simplifying the design and construction of transportation projects. Additionally, the new Transportation Secretary Doug MacDonald has instituted a series of reforms at DOT. Secretary MacDonald is making the agency more responsive to public concerns and looking at various methods legislatively and otherwise to reduce traffic congestion. Among the key reforms the new secretary is pushing is an effort to speed up the response time of the Washington State Patrol in filing accident reports.

Several other transportation reforms are under consideration including granting the governor the authority to appoint the transportation secretary. Yet, even with the passage of these reforms, we are looking at a shortfall on the order of \$30-\$40 billion for transportation needs over the next 20 years.

To address this shortfall, we must pass a long-term transportation plan. Last year we failed to pass a plan due to a dispute over whether to directly pass a revenue increase or send the proposal to a public vote. The question now is how to proceed. On this matter, I would very much appreciate your input about which approach to take. Please contact me any time with your thoughts on this issue.



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Update on the state's operating budget

The recent terrorist attacks have worsened our state's already-slumping economy resulting in layoffs and falling revenue for the state. The result is economic uncertainty for many workers and a tightening state budget. The latest revenue forecast, developed before the September 11 attacks, reduced state revenues by about \$100 million. The November forecast is likely to increase that shortfall by between \$200 million and \$800 million.

The governor has already called on the six largest state agencies to propose cuts amounting to 15 percent of each agency's budget. These agencies include the departments of Social & Health Services, Corrections, Community, Trade and Economic Development, Health, Ecology, and Fish and Wildlife. The cuts will have a real effect on services for seniors, the disabled, health care programs, parks, and other important state services. Still, we will work vigorously to trim this budget in a way that does not harm our citizens, jeopardize public safety, or worsen our economic condition.

At the same time, many city and county governments are experiencing a similar pinch. And they are most responsible for public safety, sometimes allocating half of their entire budgets for police, firefighters, and emergency medical personnel.

Please let us know your thoughts about how we can maintain these and other critical public services in this time of tightening budgets.

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